



From consanguinity to consubstantiality: Julian Pitt-Rivers' 'The Kith and the Kin'

Laurent Dousset

► To cite this version:

Laurent Dousset. From consanguinity to consubstantiality: Julian Pitt-Rivers' 'The Kith and the Kin'. Structure and Dynamics: eJournal of Anthropological and Related Sciences, 2013, 6 (1), 14pp. halshs-00814712

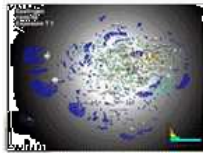
HAL Id: halshs-00814712

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00814712>

Submitted on 17 Apr 2013

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Peer Reviewed

Title:

From consanguinity to consubstantiality: Julian Pitt-Rivers' 'The Kith and the Kin'

Journal Issue:

[Structure and Dynamics, 6\(1\)](#)

Author:

[Dousset, Laurent](#), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales

Publication Date:

2013

Publication Info:

Structure and Dynamics, Social Dynamics and Complexity, Institute for Mathematical Behavioral Sciences, UC Irvine

Permalink:

<http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/4fr203tx>

Author Bio:

Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie

Keywords:

Consubstantiality, Australia, Western Desert

Local Identifier:

imbs_socdyn_sdeas_17974

Abstract:

In 1973, Julian Pitt-Rivers published a chapter in Goody's *The Character of Kinship* that, although rather infrequently used and quoted, suggested a work-around to the major criticisms that were expressed towards kinship studies in the 1970s. Reintroducing the notion of "consubstantiality", Pitt-Rivers suggested a bringing together of emic and etic approaches to kinship classification and ontology. As straightforward as it may appear, the concept, when combined with Burke's use of the notion in relation to that of "context", crystallizes a methodology for embedding structural and formal approaches of kinship within the social domains of relatedness and action. While discussing Pitt-Rivers' proposition, this paper illustrates the application of consubstantiality as an explanatory model of the extension of self in the Australian Western Desert through two examples: the diversity of marriage scenarios and their consequences and the "unusual" usage of some terminological classes in relation to close kin.

FROM CONSANGUINITY TO CONSUBSTANTIALITY JULIAN PITT-RIVERS' 'THE KITH AND THE KIN'

Laurent Dousset

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales

Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie, Marseille

Aix-Marseille University

Marseille, France

laurent.dousset@pacific-credo.fr

In 1973, Julian Pitt-Rivers published a chapter in Goody's The Character of Kinship that, although rather infrequently used and quoted, suggested a work-around to the major criticisms that were expressed towards kinship studies in the 1970s. Reintroducing the notion of "consubstantiality", Pitt-Rivers suggested a bringing together of emic and etic approaches to kinship classification and ontology. As straightforward as it may appear, the concept, when combined with Burke's use of the notion in relation to that of "context", crystallizes a methodology for embedding structural and formal approaches of kinship within the social domains of relatedness and action. While discussing Pitt-Rivers' proposition, this paper illustrates the application of consubstantiality as an explanatory model of the extension of self in the Australian Western Desert through two examples: the diversity of marriage scenarios and their consequences and the "unusual" usage of some terminological classes in relation to close kin.

After Needham's and Schneider's critiques in the 1970s evacuated kinship as a non-subject for anthropological research, many scholars endeavored to redefine what was once the pinnacle of the discipline in more emic terms. In the attempt to depart from euro-centric definitions of genealogy and classification, which were previously explicitly or implicitly considered universal aspects of human societies, notions such as 'relatedness' made their way into the theoretical apparatus. The advantages of such a concept were that it based whatever was to be analyzed on local and culture-specific modes of relating to others and that it did not assume the existence of any predefined domain of relationship conception, representation or construction. The inconvenience was, as we all know, the mystification of 'culture' in terms of incommensurable symbolic webs disjointed from the notion of 'society' and the latter would be progressively eliminated from the anthropological glossary. Every individual appears to have his or her own culture, or nearly so. As Friedman explains, complex subjectivities and emergent socialities are now linked to the generalized cultural pluralism of different identities, albeit ethnic, religious or territorial. Culture is transformed from a structure of existence to a mere role set: "the individual can practice culture by choice, by elective affinity, like joining the golf club instead of the Wahabists, at least on Monday" (Friedman 2012:239).

In the light of this change of paradigm, some have applauded the disappearance of so-called anthropological meta-discourses, while others have warned that the overemphasis of particularized narratives was weakening the discipline's capacity to engage in theoretical interactions. As expected, the real world is not as dichotomous as some would have it and in my own work I was to discover that both meta-discourse or theory and local narratives are in fact complementary, not exclusive, methodologies. There had to be ways to bridge a gap that increasingly appeared to me to be of an ideological rather than an epistemological nature. Interestingly, I found refuge in a paper that was published in the same period as Needham and Schneider's critiques, but that had not, it seemed, attracted the attention I now believe it deserved. The suggested opportunity it provided for combining structure and practice, or universalism and relativism, in one and the same analysis was probably too simple and straightforward—and therefore also powerful—for it to be adopted at a moment of anthropological history in which scholars were aiming at divorce rather than reconciliation. What I am referring to is Julian Pitt-Rivers' chapter published in Jack Goody's *The character of kinship* (1973), two years after Needham's *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* and eleven years before Schneider's *A critique of the study of Kinship*.¹ Nelson Graburn (1977:1157), in a review of Goody's volume, wrote the following paragraph:

Julian Pitt-Rivers' paper, 'The Kith and the Kin,' again starts with the basically moral nature of kinship and the notion of amity and parallels the latter with Sahlins' notion of generalized reciprocity and Schneider's idea of diffuse enduring solidarity. But he identifies the symbolic fundament of kinship relationships as that of consubstantiality. He then examines and classifies various types of institutionalized relationships, such as adoptive and ritual kinship, friendship, and marriage, in what is perhaps the most stimulating paper in the book.

Unfortunately, at this stage at least, that is about all that was to be said about Pitt-Rivers' contribution, "the most stimulating paper." Also one, I wish to add here, that is, despite its potential, a neglected contribution in the realm of understanding human relationships, be it based on the axiom of 'kinship' or that of 'relatedness.'² What the concept of consubstantiality—the extension of the idiom of shared substance—as defined in "The Kith and the Kin" allows for, I argue in this article, is the reintroduction of materialist aspects in studying kinship through an articulation of 'structure', 'substance', 'practice' and 'context'.

After a few considerations on the notion of consubstantiality in general as derived from the Christian religion and in particular as applied in anthropology, I will move on to adapt the usage Pitt-Rivers suggested for this concept to that of consubstantiality as a sharing of contexts as proposed by Burke (1969a and 1969b). I will then use a few ethnographic examples taken from the domain of kinship to illustrate how marriage rules, as opposed to marriage practices, as well as formal terminological systems as opposed to their contextual usages, gain from an understanding of kinship as being part of an ontological value system expressed in particular contexts.

Consubstantiality before Pitt-Rivers

Consubstantiality is not, as such, an innovative notion, of course, since it is a major concept in Christian theology, probably adopted from the Egyptian tradition (Beatrice 2002). Homoousion (or Latin *consubstantialis*), as it was clarified at the Council of Nicea in the year AD 325, is the intrinsic nature of the Trinity and the relationship between God, his uncreated Son and the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Athanasian Creed, “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” A distinct, although related, concept is that of ‘consubstantiation’, according to which the body of Jesus Christ exists together with the substance of bread in the Holy Eucharist. It does not express an identity of substances in the same sense as consubstantiality does, but only their parallelism or coexistence.

As is the case with many anthropological concepts, the usage of consubstantiality is derived from preexisting semantic histories and fields, but it also departs from them in significant ways in academic jargon. There are early traces of the uses of consubstantiality as an elucidatory mechanism in the anthropological literature (see Jones 1986). The objective in much of the latter was, however, not that different from its Christian usages and endeavored to explain religious phenomena as embedded in consubstantial conceptions and perceptions: people consider themselves to be sharing some sort of substance with religious forces and this sharing constitutes their essence and person. Totemism, for example, was explained as a phenomenon in which consubstantiality is involved. Lévi-Bruhl spoke of “the mystic consubstantiality in which the individual, the ancestral being living again in him and the animal or plant species that forms his totem are all mingled” (in Bullock 1931:185, also see Frazer (1931[1929]:20 or Lang 1905). In many cases, this consubstantiality between the individual and his or her totem, in particular in what is called ‘conception totemism’ was explained by the postulate of ‘nescience’: the lack of knowledge in so-called small-scale societies, and in particular the societies of Australian Aborigines, about the physiological process of procreation (for example, Ashley Montagu 1974[1937]; see Merlan 1986 for a discussion). The concept of consubstantiality was, in these contexts, simply used to refer to the indigenous cosmogony (read ‘non-science’) about ontogeny and phylogeny. Since Australian Aboriginal people do not understand the physiological function of sexuality, they explain reproduction as some sort of reincarnation of mythic beings and essences and thus consider themselves to be consubstantial with them. As one can easily understand, this usage has not evolved from a religious grounding of the concept and it does not address the question of relatedness as one of the foundations of interaction among human beings. Pitt Rivers’ redefinition of consubstantiality, however, provides an important step forward in this respect.

From Pitt-Rivers’ consubstantiality to Burke’s context

As I have already noted elsewhere (Dousset 2005), it is significant that Holy (1996:9) introduces his discussion of anthropological perspectives on kinship with the notion of consubstantiality as it was forged by Pitt-Rivers: “people see themselves as mutually related to each other because they share a common substance and they see themselves as unrelated to those with whom they do not.” While sharing substance is, in Pitt-Rivers’ view, still somehow related to material exchanges and circulation, it is not limited to the

sole consequence of procreation: “consubstantiality can be established by other ways than by breeding as the example of blood brotherhood shows” (Pitt-Rivers (1973:93). Indeed, suckling the same milk or eating the same food are, in many cultures, processes that lead to shared substances and, therefore, to the establishment of relatedness and kinship ties (see for example El Guindi in this issue and Strathern 1973). Pitt-Rivers (1973:92) defined consubstantiality in these terms as “the prime nexus between individuals for the extension of self.” His proposition may appear, at least in contemporary times, to be something very ordinary. In the 1970’s, however, and to some extent still today as we will see below (and provided we extend Pitt-Rivers’ idea in a new direction), to consider genealogical ‘consanguinity’ as simply one type of consubstantiality, which thus becomes the precinct of specific cultural constructs, was a major step forward.

Of course, Morgan (1997[1871]), using the plural form in *Systems of consanguinity and affinity*, had already implied that consanguinity may not be a universally applicable concept without hurdles and, after Pitt-Rivers, Héritier (1981:13) wrote that “the definition of consanguinity is in the first place a question of choice and social recognition,” but they were not actually able to bridge the gap in conceptual terms. As Cucchiari (1981:35) wrote:

Like Barnes and Pitt-Rivers I take a middle position between those who say kinship is genealogy reified and those who view kinship as a set of sociocultural categories that also have genealogical referents Pitt-Rivers articulates this middle position. Following Fortes, he views kinship as relations of ‘prescribed amity.’ Unlike friendship, a set of dyadic relationships, kinship is a system of relationships or categories over which rights, duties, statuses, and roles are differentially distributed and inherited. What distinguishes kinship, as a social system, from other systems is its underlying notion of shared substance: ‘consubstantiation.’³ The idea of shared substance is culture specific and may have little or nothing to do with the concepts of physical science.

Meyer Fortes (1969:251) indeed defined ‘amity’ as a “set of normative premises ... focused upon a general and fundamental axiom” that he calls “the axiom of prescriptive altruism.” Pitt-Rivers (1973) understood prescriptive altruism to be the foundation of the notion of reciprocity, which is called into existence by the “assumption that everyman, individually or in solidarity with a collectivity with which he identifies himself, seeks his own interest and advancement ...” (Pitt-Rivers 1973:89).⁴ Amity, as Pitt-Rivers himself explains (p. 89), “looks curious, for friendship, far from being commonly regarded as the essence of kinship is usually opposed to it. ... It appears that Fortes has chosen to define the essence of kinship by appealing to the very concept of what it is not. ... I shall argue,” Pitt-Rivers writes again, “that it offers the possibility of placing the notion of kinship in a wider framework and of escaping from the polemics concerning its relationship to physical reproduction” (p. 90). Fortes, and with him Pitt-Rivers, seem to see kinship as a category of the wider domain of amity, justified, as Pitt-Rivers explains himself, by the fact that “non-kin amity loves to masquerade as kinship” (p. 90), leading to the question “when is kinship artificial and when is it ‘true kinship’?” (p. 91)—a truly

misleading question, I should add.

However, Pitt-Rivers starts from what I believe to be a productive idea: that kinship is the extension of self and that physical reproduction, although insufficient, furnishes the model (or one model) for such extensions. I argue further that kinship is not only a grid of relationships, but is mainly concerned with the meanings underlying relationships. What is extended are not the relationships as such, but their ontological value, since what we need to underline here is the proposition that kinship is, as Craig (1979) says, an ontological system, not only a system of classification. To show how this assumption has informed my own approach in the field, I need to make some detours and rephrase Pitt-Rivers' consubstantiality in the light of other aspects of analysis.

Despite Pitt-Rivers' interesting definition of consubstantiality, he did not actually apply it himself. Maybe he was concerned with the limitations 'consubstantiality' implied as a methodological tool. As such, it seemed to offer only a generalization or relativization of the principles inherent in the notion of 'consanguinity'. To further develop the concept, we must link it to other notions, and in particular to those developed by Kenneth Burke (1969a, 1969b) who proposed an existential signification of consubstantiality (see Dousset 2005). Burke explains that while substance is used to define what a thing is, it derives from something that this thing is not, as the breaking down of the word into sub (below) and stance (stand) makes clear. "The word, in its etymological origins would refer to an attribute of the thing's context" (Burke 1969a:23).

Transferring etymological deconstructions onto methodological considerations is problematic. Let us play this mind game, nevertheless, and consider that Burke's proposition provides clues as to how an applicable understanding of consubstantiality in his terms takes form. It is an identity of things based on a common context but not necessarily on a common material substance. If we translate this into the study of kinship, we may suggest that kinship is as much the actual relationship between people and the way these relationships are formally calculated, as the context in which they take on a particular meaning or ontological class. This suggestion can be related to the idea of instantiation of kin terms as proposed by Read (2005:16)

Instantiation of kin terms can involve sets of persons outside of genealogical tracing; e.g., adopted children, or persons inconsistent with genealogical tracing, such as same sex marriages in which one person is identified as the 'wife' and the other as the 'husband'. Instantiation of kin terms is neither determined by features of genealogical tracing nor limited to properties that can be expressed within the conceptual structure of genealogical tracing. Instead, instantiation is by cultural consensus as to who is encompassed within the range of a kin term when it is applied to concrete individuals.

For example, a woman does not always have and express the same relationship to her mother. It will adapt and change depending on the context in which she interacts with her mother: in the company of her siblings, eating with in-laws, attending the family's Christmas celebration and so on. The context will invest the word 'mother' with particular meanings or ontological classes, but, conversely, the context will also be colored by a normative or nearly normative consideration of the mother-daughter kin relationship. Thus what remains to be done, in addition to the identification of locally recognized

kinship categories, is the analysis of the ontological classes or values that are considered to locally produce particular contexts, or are interpreted as doing so.

A few possible examples will be discussed below, but what we can already advance is that by adopting the complex aspects of consubstantiality as a vehicle for the construction of relatedness, we have also moved from a purely model-based approach to kinship towards kinship conceived as a process of interaction with others in particular contexts, a process that has been widely adopted by kinship specialists (for example, Carsten 1995 and 2000, and formalized by Read 2007). In my own work, one important task has been to reintegrate kinship into other social domains such as the political and economic organization and the belief-system and to understand how relationships seen as a sharing of substances (read 'contexts', following Burke) create genealogy-like structures.

Ethnography

Understanding marriage patterns and practices, and even marriage rules, in terms of their integration in traditional as well as contemporary economic networks of exchange and reciprocity in the Australian Western Desert has led me to consider promises of marriages as identical to marriages themselves. There is no particular reason to distinguish the promise of a wife during initiation in Australia from an actual marriage when the strategies in which the two processes are involved have similar if not identical aims and when the ontological classes of the relationships established are similar, if not identical. Marriage and initiation are contexts that produce similar ontological values. In terms of kinship, they produce identical consubstantialities. Let us illustrate this point with some ethnography.

In the Australian Western desert, people have clear ideas about who should marry whom. These ideas, framed explicitly as rules, are astonishingly structural in nature. People should marry, so they say, a person whose father you call *kamuru* (mother's brother) and whose mother you call *kurntili* (father's sister). Moreover, they add, the *kamuru* in question needs to be a man's initiator (*waputju*), and his wife thus becomes one's *yumari* (mother-in-law). *Waputju* is polysemic, designating both the initiator and the father-in-law. This *waputju* promises his daughter to the young initiate during the ceremony and this daughter becomes *kurri* (wife) and is in the ceremonial context called *pi-karta* (lit. 'the one obtained through pain'). Additionally, so they say, one's father initiates the latter's son and promises one's sister to this future brother-in-law. Moreover, the initiator (father-in-law) is one's mother's brother and one's mother-in-law is one's father's sister. Linking discursive rules and actual practices, people suggest that all marriages follow this pattern.

The above description, which is a condensed form of the many discussions I have had with people from the Western Desert, could have been drawn from a textbook: marriage is not a question of choice or of strategy, it is the result of an explicit compliance with what, since Lévi-Strauss (1967[1947]), has been called a system of direct exchange, something of a 'classic' for Dravidian types of terminologies and kin classifications. Moreover, it expresses an 'alliance of marriage', as Dumont (1968) defined it: the repetition of structurally identical exchanges over generations. The effect of such a system is

boundedness, because as families or family groups are intermarrying consistently over time, it does not allow for the extension of the social network. This extension of the network, however, is exactly what one would expect for these societies, considering their socio-historical context (see Dousset 2005 for a study of the large-scale networks) as well as the ecological harshness in which these groups still subsist today: ecological conditions that imply the need for large-scale cooperation and the possibility to access distant resources in moments of scarcity. One would rather expect, for the Western Desert, what Keen (2002) has called 'shifting webs': mechanisms that enhance the diversification, rather than the repetition, of alliance.

Intrigued by these questions and not satisfied with the structural models expressed by indigenous peoples themselves only, I continued the study with a deeper analysis of actual practices and the collation of extensive genealogies and life histories before returning to reinvestigate these rather normalized narratives. First of all, the genealogies, which go back about one century (about fifty years before first contact with the Western world; see Dousset 2011), depict only very few cases that do in fact comply with some sort of exchange and only one case of an actual direct exchange. Secondly, only very few examples reflected a marriage with a man's actual initiator's daughter. The frequency of compliance with the two above-mentioned rules is below one percent of all marriages; an extremely strange situation considering the highly normalized tone interviewed people employ with respect to what they consider 'inalterable rules'.

The usual argument advanced in the past to explain ethnographies that seemed to contradict the anthropological models so dear to Radcliffe-Brown, Lévi-Strauss and others was to explain them through the cultural breakdown experienced by Australian societies. Lévi-Strauss' reply (1968) to Hiatt (1968), when the latter demonstrated that the notion of 'patrilineal local clan' was difficult to defend in the area where he worked, illustrates this method: Lévi-Strauss underlined that while he was not really interested in peoples' actual practices but rather in the general structures that organized their minds, in any case he also thought that the Gidjingali studied by Hiatt had lost their culture and could not be used as an example to counter well-established anthropological models. Lévi-Strauss would probably express a similar critique with regard to the contradictions that appear in the Western Desert material mentioned above and state that the discrepancy between discourse and practice is evidence of a cultural breakdown. Further ethnography, however, shows that this kind of critique is not valid. Let us have a closer look at marriage and initiation in this context.

When discussing actual life histories and marriage patterns, as opposed to marriage rules and norms, Western Desert people distinguish several types of marriages (Dousset 1999). *Pikarta*, already mentioned, is the wife promised through initiation and reflects the discursive, ideal-typical union: a mother's brother acts as an initiator promising his daughter and through this becomes a father-in-law. However, during initiation, another actor is relevant: *pampurlpa*. She is the initiator's classificatory wife, never an actual wife. During initiation, she also promises her own daughter to the initiate. After the ceremony, the young man thus already has two potential wives. Let me here mention that polygyny is possible, but very rare. In fact, the young man will usually marry an-

other girl altogether, either through elopement (*karlkurnu*), or thanks to repetitive presents (*warngirnu*) to this girl's family, his future family-in-law. Furthermore, all these women are called *kurri* (wife) and their parents are called *waputju* and *yumari* (initiator/father-in-law and mother-in-law), whether they are actual parents-in-law or initiators or not. The relationships established with these people involve obligations of care and reciprocity identical to those established with one's actual parents-in-law.

Waputju thus changes, in analytical terms, from being polysemic, as mentioned above, to being metonymic, including the container as well as its various possible contents, expressing a relationship defined by similar ontological values (read 'contexts') rather than actual genealogical relationships. And, going even further, people consider marriages established through *karlkurnu* or *warngirnu* to be actual exchanges. They consider them to be in complete compliance with the normative system mentioned earlier. When asked to explain what to anthropologists appears as a contradiction, they further add that 'you got to marry little bit long way' and 'you got to marry other places and other people'; that is, shifting webs. It is not possible here to go into the particulars of each value system. Let us simply note that boundedness and its apparent opposite, diversification and openness—or 'discourse' or 'rule' and their apparent opposite 'practice'—, are not really in contradiction here. They reflect two complementary enactments of one and the same principle: using context as a *modus operandi* for relationship definition and establishment.

To make this suggestion clear, we need to add another aspect to the analysis: terminological usages. Here, the importance of context/consubstantiality becomes explicit.⁵ Australian Western Desert terminology has caused considerable problems (Tjon Sie Fat 1998). Following Elkin's ethnography (1931, 1938-40, 1940), kinship specialists such as Lévi-Strauss (1967[1947]) or Scheffler (1978) depicted what is often called the Aluridja system as being rather unconventional for Australia.⁶ Western Desert people do not seem to distinguish cross-cousins from siblings and have some sort of Hawaiian system at Ego's generation, while they do distinguish mother's brothers from fathers and father's sisters from mothers, forming a more Dravidian-like level. The conclusions drawn were that Western Desert people marry people they call brother and sister. In fact, Elkin's ethnography was already problematic since he applied "the short-term survey method" (Burke 2005:212), which did not enable him to understand that terminological usages in the Western Desert are heavily context-dependent. Short field trips did not allow him to investigate those usages that apply to potential affines; that is, to geographically and genealogically distant persons who are, as was briefly mentioned above, preferred in marriage arrangements in a 'shifting webs' perspective.

The consideration of the context of terminological usages as a place for creating consubstantial relationships shows that there are at least two particular contexts in which terminological classes reflect different ontological classes (see Dousset, 2012). One such context I call sociological. It is a context in which social category systems, in particular alternate generational moieties that are fundamental aspects in Western Desert everyday life, are the reference of discussion. Here, cross-parallel distinctions are suppressed and classification retains only generation and gender as componential markers. All women of

generation 1 and generation -1 are called 'mother' and all men 'father'. All women of generation 0, 2 and -2 are called 'sister' and all men are called 'brother'. The terminology that usually has five levels is skewed so as to produce only two Hawaiian levels.

Then there is what I call the 'egological' context in which individual interrelations are the point of reference. Here, cross and parallel are distinguished, though not in all cases. On the one hand, cross-cousins who are genealogically and geographically distant, and hence potential wives and husbands, are indeed called 'cross-cousins' or 'wife/husband' as we would expect. Co-generationalists who are considered to share too much substance and experience (read contexts), who have grown up together and who have lived in the same camp or community are, on the other hand, classed with 'brothers' and 'sisters' even when they are cross-cousins (also see Tonkinson 1975).

Far from being 'aberrant', as Lévi-Strauss (1967[1947]:231, 251 and figure 56, p. 249) wrote with respect to the Western Desert kinship system, we see here again, as was the case with marriage eluded to before, that it is not the classificatory position alone, but the opportunity to diversify the network and gain access to resources, in one of the harshest environments ever inhabited by human beings (Gould 1969), that determines the applicable terminology. Lévi-Strauss, of course, did not have the necessary ethnographic material to understand this. But, after reading his response to Hiatt, it can also be assumed that he would not have taken it into account in any case.

Conclusion

Marshall Sahlins has recently published in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2011a and 2011b) a paper in two parts that is relevant for our discussion. Sahlins' proposition of the 'mutuality of being' coincides closely, I believe, with Pitt-Rivers' consubstantiality as an extension of self, as long as we do indeed understand substance not as an identifiable material or immaterial characteristic, but as an ontological element of a shared context. Mutuality of being recalls what I have suggested should be understood as value systems inherent to particular contexts. What was further suggested in this article was to consider kinship as being, by definition, based on consubstantiality, and, further, that consubstantiality must be considered as part of a process or strategy of context-creation. Initiation rituals are such contexts. Camp-proximity and living together are others. During the former, interdependence between initiator and initiate, to take just one example, are glued into a kin-like relationship: that between a father-in-law and a son-in-law, with all the consequences ensuing from this relationship, such as the obligation to care for each other and to provide each other with access to resources. In the latter, prolonged co-residence, implying co-nurture and co-experience, is thought to produce a relationship that has identical ontological value to that between actual siblings: similarity, if not identity, in most aspects (except for gender) and therefore prohibition of sexual intercourse or marriage, even though, from a classificatory point of view, it may be potentially permitted. What these ontological values are in each of the particular contexts and how they relate to each other, however, is something that still needs to be analyzed carefully in the Western Desert and elsewhere.

¹ Let us recall, however, that Schneider published the first version of *Kinship, Nationality and Religion* ... in 1969 (republished in 1977), in which he already pointed out a certain number of problems he took up in his 1984 critique.

² Craig (1979) and Cucchiari (1981) are among the few that have explicitly made use of Pitt-Rivers' contribution in their own work.

³ Note that Cucchiari uses the word 'consubstantiation', which creates some confusion with the Christian Eucharistic notion. Let us assume here that what he actually meant was 'consubstantiality'.

⁴ To base the discussion of amity on a utilitarian idea of interest, or in fact 'enlightened self-interest' (Tocqueville 2000[1835]), is problematic. We will not go into the discussion of these complex notions, as the work of Adam Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville, Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill and many more testify, but rather concentrate on the relationship between amity and kinship as such.

⁵ These aspects of Western Desert ethnography have been discussed in depth in another publication (Dousset, 2012) and I will only recall here the most important considerations.

⁶ But note that the Kurnai of New South Wales described among others in Fison and Howitt (1991[1880]) have, in many respects, a similar system.

References cited

- Beatrice, P. F. 2002. The word 'homousios' from Hellenism to Christianity. *Church History* 71(2):243-272.
- Bullock, C. 1931. Totemism among the Mashona tribes. *Man* 31(185):184-187.
- Burke, K. 1969a[1945]. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- _____. 1969b[1950]. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Burke, P. 2005. Law's anthropology: From ethnography to expert testimony in three native title claims, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Carsten, J. (ed.) 2000. *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carsten, J. 1995. The substance of kinship and the heat of the hearth: feeding, personhood, and relatedness among Malays in Pulau Langkawi. *American Ethnologist* 22(2):223-241.
- Craig, D. 1979. Immortality through kinship: The vertical transmission of substance and symbolic estate. *American Anthropologist* 81(1):94-96.
- Cucchiari, S. 1981. "The gender revolution and the transition from bisexual horde to patrilocal band: the origins of gender hierarchy," in *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. Edited by S. B. Ortner & H. Whitehead, pp. 31-79. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Dousset, L. 1999. L'alliance de mariage et la promesse d'épouses chez les Ngaatjatjarra du Désert de l'Ouest australien. *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 108:3-17.
- _____. 2002. Accounting for context and substance: the Australian Western Desert kinship system. *Anthropological Forum*, 12(2):193-204.
- _____. 2003. On the misinterpretation of the Aluridja kinship system type (Australian Western Desert). *Social Anthropology*, 11(1):43-61.
- _____. 2005. Structure and substance: Combining 'classic' and 'modern' kinship studies in the Australian Western Desert. *TAJA* 16(1):18-30.
- _____. 2011. *Mythes, Missiles et Cannibales: Le Récit d'un Premier Contact en Australie*. Paris: Société des Océanistes.
- _____. 2012. "'Horizontal' and 'vertical' skewing: similar objectives, two solutions?," in *Crow-Omaha: New Light on a Classic Problem of Kinship Analysis*. Edited by T. R. Trautmann and P. M. Whiteley, pp. 261-277. Tucson: Arizona University Press.
- Dumont, L. 1968[1957]. "The marriage alliance," in *Marriage, Family and Residence*. Edited by P. Bohannan & J. Middleton, pp. 203-211. New York: The Natural History Press.
- Elkin, A. P. 1931. The social organisation of South Australian tribes. *Oceania*, 2(1):44-73.
- _____. 1938-40. Kinship in South Australia. *Oceania* 8(4); 9(1); 10(2); 10(3); 10(4): 419-452; 41-78; 198-234; 295-349; 369-89.
- _____. 1940. Sections and kinship in some desert tribes of Australia. *Man* 40(23-45): 21-24.

- Fison, L. and A. W. Howitt 1991[1880]. *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*. Canberra (Melbourne): AIATSIS (Robertson).
- Fortes, M. 1969. *Kinship and the Social order. 4. The Legacy of L. H. Morgan*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Frazer, J. G. 1931[1929]. *Mythes sur l'origine du feu*. Paris: Payot.
- Friedman, J. 2012. "The dialectic of cosmopolitanization and indigenization in the contemporary world system: contradictory configurations of class and culture," in *The Scope of Anthropology: Maurice Godelier's Work in Context*. Edited by L. Dousset and S. Tcherkézoff, pp. 212-245. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Goody, J. (ed.) 1973. *The Character of Kinship*. London, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gould, R. A. 1969. Subsistence behavior among the Western Desert Aborigines of Australia. *Oceania* 39(4):253-274.
- Graburn, N. H. H. 1977. The character of kinship. *American Journal of Sociology* 82(5):1156-1159.
- Hiatt, L. R. 1968. "Ownership and use of land among the Australian Aborigines," in *Man the Hunter*. Edited by R. B. Lee & I. De Vore, pp. 99-102. Chicago: Aldine.
- Jones, R. A. 1986. Durkheim, Frazer, and Smith: The role of analogies and exemplars in the development of Durkheim's sociology of religion. *American Journal of Sociology* 92(3):596-627.
- Keen, I. 2002. Seven Aboriginal marriage systems and their correlates. *Anthropological Forum* 12(2):145-157.
- Lang, A. 1905. *The Secret of the Totem*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1967[1947]. *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté*. Paris: Mouton.
- _____. 1968. "Gidjingali marriage arrangements: comments and rejoinder," Discussions Part IV, 22b, in *Man the Hunter*. Edited by R. B. Lee & I. De Vore, pp. 210-211. Chicago: Aldine.
- Merlan, F. 1986. Australian Aboriginal conception beliefs revisited. *Man* 21(3):474-93.
- Montagu, A. 1974[1937]. *Coming into Being Among the Australian Aborigines* (revised and expanded second edition). London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Morgan, L. H. 1997[1871]. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press [Smithsonian Institution volume 17].
- Needham, R. (ed.) 1971. *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage*. London: Tavistock Publication, A.S.A. Monographs 11.
- Pitt-Rivers, J. 1973. "The kith and the kin," in *The Character of Kinship*. Edited by J. R. Goody, pp. 89-105. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Read, D. 2005. "Cultural construct + Instantiation = Constructed reality." Paper given at the symposium *Cultural Idea systems: Logical Structures and The Logic of Instantiation*. Washington DC: AAA meetings November 28–December 2, 2001. UC Los Angeles: Human Complex Systems. Retrieved from:
<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dq9p0cp>.
- _____. 2007. Kinship theory: A paradigm shift. *Ethnology* 46:329-364.

- Sahlins, M. 2011a. What is kinship (part one). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17:2-19.
- _____. 2011b. What is kinship (part two). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17:227-242.
- Scheffler, H. W. 1978. *Australian Kin Classification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, 33.
- Schneider, D. M. 1977[1969]. "Kinship, nationality, and religion in American culture: Toward a definition of kinship," in *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meanings*. Edited by J. L. Dolgin, D. S. Keimnitzer and D. M. Schneider, pp. 63-71. New York: Columbia University Press.
- _____. 1984. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Strathern, A. 1973. "Kinship, descent and locality: Some New Guinea examples," in *The Character of Kinship*. Edited by J. R. Goody, pp. 21-33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tjon Sie Fat, F. E. 1998. "On the formal analysis of 'Dravidian,' 'Iroquois,' and 'Generational' varieties as nearly associative combinations," in *Transformations of Kinship*. Edited by M. Godelier, T. R. Trautmann & F. E. Tjon Sie Fat, pp. 59-93. Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution.
- Tocqueville, A. de 2000[1835]. *Democracy in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tonkinson, R. 1975. "The Riddle of the Non-Marriageable Cross-Cousin." Unpublished seminar given at the Australian National University, Canberra.